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Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. On 8 December 2005, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/60, entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control", in paragraph 4 of which the Assembly invites all Member States to communicate to the Secretary-General information on the measures they have adopted to promote the objectives envisaged in the resolution and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report containing that information to the Assembly at its sixty-first session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 23 February 2006, a note verbale was sent to Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies received are contained in section II below. Additional replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Bolivia

[Original: Spanish]
[27 April 2006]

Aware of the consequences of violating environmental norms in the implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control, Bolivia enacted the Environment Act (Act No. 1333) on 27 April 1992. This Act governs the protection and conservation of the environment and promotes sustainable development, with a view to improving the quality of life of the Bolivian people. It also prohibits the introduction, storage or transport through the national territory of toxic or radioactive waste or other waste of internal and/or external origin which, by their nature, constitute a danger to human health and the environment.

In keeping with its pacifist policy, Bolivia does not have nuclear programmes or projects. Bolivia therefore urges States that possess nuclear, chemical or bacteriological weapons to fulfil their international commitments not to harm the environment and human health.

Chile

[Original: Spanish]
[1 June 2006]

Arms control in Chile is governed by Act No. 17798.

In the field of environmental norms, Chile enacted Supreme Decree No. 95 of 2001, which, in article 3, paragraph (d), stipulates that nuclear reactors and facilities and related installations should be subject to evaluation for their impact on the environment.

Nuclear facilities are defined as plants that use nuclear fuels and materials and plants that process nuclear materials, including installations that reprocess irradiated nuclear fuels. Related installations are defined as storage depots for nuclear or radioactive materials associated with nuclear reactors or facilities.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[30 May 2006]

Cuba wishes to recall that, for the eleventh consecutive year and with the support of the vast majority of Member States, the General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control", an initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement which enjoys the firm support of the Government of Cuba.

Concern about the environment is a growing priority for many States, international organizations, non-government organizations and individuals. Military activity, the indiscriminate use of any weapons in armed conflicts, the potential for serious accidents related to weapons of mass destruction and the arms race in general have historically had very serious effects on the environment and on life on Earth.

Observance of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control is particularly relevant in the current international context given the negative impact of the unilateral behaviour of the major economic and military power. The super-Power wages wars of aggression in different parts of the world, indiscriminately uses all types of weapons and rejects the possibility of assuming new multilateral commitments on the matter. It is also conducting an arms race that has allowed the development of new weapons with harmful effects on the health of people and the environment, and it is increasing its enormous arsenals of weapons of mass destruction.

The existence and continuous refinement of weapons of mass destruction constitute the most serious threats to international peace and security, as well as to the fragile environmental balance of our planet and sustainable development for all without distinction. Cuba therefore reiterates that the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction remains the only really effective way to avoid the consequences of their use or of accidental contamination.

In this connection, it is very important for international disarmament treaties on the prohibition of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction to become universal.

It is urgent for the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a nuclear disarmament treaty with the objective of eliminating nuclear weapons within a specific period of time, under strict international control. An international treaty on nuclear disarmament should necessarily include measures for environmental protection.

Enhancing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention in the years ahead is fundamental to environmental protection and biodiversity preservation on our planet. The draft Verification Protocol to the Convention, under negotiation some years ago, included proposals for environmental protection measures in the implementation of the Convention. The international community should not abandon this objective.

It is important to highlight the relevance and significance of the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques, ratified by Cuba on 10 April 1978 and still in full effect. It should be universally accepted; however, only 72 States are party to this important instrument.[1]

Cuba has vast experience in the adoption and implementation of laws and policies to comply with environmental regulations in all spheres of social life, including the implementation of several international instruments on disarmament and arms control.

Cuba has a solid legal basis for environmental protection. Article 27 of the Cuban Constitution has incorporated the concept of sustainable development. Act No. 81/1997 on the environment establishes the principles of Cuban environmental policy. The Act states that "environmental management is comprehensive and cross-cutting. State agencies, other entities and institutions, society and citizens in general participate in it in a coordinated manner, according to their respective areas of competence and abilities".

It is worth noting that Decree-Law No. 207 on the use of nuclear energy establishes the general provisions on this subject. Decree No. 208 on the State System of Accounting for and Control of Nuclear Material provides the norms for implementation of the system in order to contribute to the efficient management of nuclear material and to detect any unauthorized use, loss or movement thereof. Decree-Law No. 190/99 and Resolution No. 2/2004 of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment embody domestic law on biosecurity and implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. As regards chemical weapons, Decree-Law No. 202/1999 governs the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Cuba. In 2005, the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers adopted Agreement 5517 on offences violating the provisions of the chemical weapons convention, which complements the legislative measures required for the implementation of the Convention.

Cuba wishes to reiterate its concern about the serious impact of military activities on the environment and the lives of people. In our geographical region, the serious harm to the health of the people and the ecology of the Puerto Rican island Vieques is still evident, a result of the United States Navy's indiscriminate use of the island as a base for military exercises for its acts of aggression and conquest, during which they even used radioactive materials. The inhabitants of Vieques have the highest cancer rate in all of Puerto Rico.[2]

[1] According to *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General, Status as at 31 December 2005*.

[2] Data compiled in the Central Cancer Registry of the Department of Health of Puerto Rico indicate that cancer rates in Vieques began to increase starting with the commencement of United States Navy bombing in 1979 (Zavala-Segarra, D. *Incidencia de Cáncer en Vieques* (Cancer Cases in Vieques)).

During the Kosovo war, the use of uranium in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombardment of industrial infrastructures, refineries, chemical plants and fuel depots caused severe, long-term damage to the environment and the health of the inhabitants.[3] In the current United States war of conquest and occupation against Iraq, the damage to the environment, assets and lives of human beings has been devastating.[4]

Cuba vigorously calls for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction as the only effective solution for avoiding the consequences of their use and equally vigorously denounces the immoral and unjustifiable current and future wars of aggression and conquest, which are part of the imperialist strategy for world domination and are so harmful to the exercise of the right to life, peace, and sustainable development.

El Salvador

[Original: Spanish]
[21 April 2006]

The Government of the Republic of El Salvador observes the environmental norms established in the Environment Act for the implementation of the Programme for Arms Limitation and Control for Reaching a Reasonable Balance of Forces and Promoting Stability, Mutual Confidence and Transparency in Central America. During the past year, environmental impact preventive measures were taken in the destruction of stockpiled firearms and explosives.

First, on 25 November 2004, a total of 4,530 units of stockpiled explosives were destroyed. In conformity with existing legislation, the destruction methods employed conformed with recommended environmental norms. The destruction was carried out by outdoor detonations.

Second, on 15 December 2004, 2,007 illegal firearms confiscated by the National Civil Police were destroyed. Another 5,477 illegal firearms confiscated by the National Civil Police were destroyed on 14 July 2005 and 22 December 2005. In conformity with existing legislation, the destruction methods employed conformed with recommended environmental norms. The firearms were melted in high-temperature melting furnaces.

The various stages of planning and implementation of the destruction of the aforementioned arms and explosives incorporated a number of measures for preventing environmental damage.

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[3] During NATO bombings against Yugoslavia in 1999, some 31,000 missiles with depleted uranium were launched against 112 targets, most of them in Kosovo and southern Serbia. According to Dr. Slobodan Cikaric of the Belgrade Institute of Oncology, "It is too early to say what the consequences of the 1999 contamination in Serbia are ... One must bear in mind the fact that radiation-related leukemia takes between two to five years after exposure to develop. It can take up to 10 years for other radiation-related cancers to develop".

[4] The British medical journal *The Lancet* concluded that, "making conservative assumptions we think that about 100,000 excess deaths, or more [of civilians] have happened since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Violence accounted for most of the excess deaths and air strikes from coalition forces accounted for most of the violent deaths". The article adds that 84 per cent of the deaths were attributed to coalition forces — and most were women and children.

To safeguard against possible accidents during the transport, handling and destruction of explosive materials, relevant national legislation, specifically the Act and Regulations on the Control and Regulation of Arms, Munitions, Explosives and Related Items, was followed.

Accordingly, the detonations were carried out at military training sites where munitions have regularly been destroyed, so that only land that had already suffered an environmental impact was used.

In that context, it should be noted that, at the military sites, the detonations were performed on large areas of wasteland where there is little vegetation. This facilitates the temporary migration of local fauna to alternative habitats and thus diminishes the impact on wildlife.

In addition, the choice of primary explosive, based on the advice of the engineering command of the Armed Forces, took into account the need to have a high explosive charge that would generate the smallest possible quantity of residue. The design of the shafts and the placement of the primary explosive ensured that there would be no discharge of explosive material, thus preventing adjacent terrain from becoming contaminated.

Finally, during the on-site operations, the adjacent land was prepared and fire control systems were set up to prevent the outbreak of fires.

Finland

[Original: English]
[11 May 2006]

Finland contributes, through the G8 Global Partnership initiative, to the destruction, required in the Chemical Weapons Convention, of chemical weapons stockpiles in the Russian Federation. In 2000-03, Finnish support totalling 993,000 euros was used to set up an environmental monitoring network at the chemical weapons destruction facilities in Gorny and Kambarka. In 2005-06 Finland supported, with 325,000 euros, an international non-governmental organization outreach programme, the aim of which is to facilitate the safe and environmentally sound destruction of chemical weapons in the Russian Federation. In 2006, Finland will commit an additional 700,000 euros to support Russian chemical weapons destruction, including related non-governmental organization activities. Finland's support to the Global Partnership initiative also extends to the nuclear field, where important synergies between environmental goals and security/non-proliferation objectives can be gained. Besides contributing 2 million euros to the nuclear window of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership in 2002-06 and 1.5 million euros to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund in 2003-07, Finland finances long-term cooperation projects, notably in the fields of nuclear waste management, nuclear material safeguards and nuclear power plant safety in north-western Russia.

The Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Verifin, is Finland's national authority for the implementation of the chemical weapons convention, and one of the world's leading laboratories in the field of chemical weapons identification and analysis. Environmental issues are integrated in the research programme of the Institute. Decontamination, including its

environmental aspects, is one of the research topics on which the Institute cooperates with the Technical Research Centre of the Finnish Defence Forces.

As regards biological weapons, the Finnish National Public Health Institute and Finnish Defence Forces established, in 2005, a Centre for Biothreat Preparedness to enhance Finland's capacities to assess, prepare and respond to biological threats. The Centre participates in Finnish efforts to implement the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. By bringing together civilian and military expertise, the Centre will contribute to a comprehensive approach to biological threats, covering both biosafety and biosecurity aspects, and thus enhance synergies between environmental and disarmament objectives.

Greece

[Original: English]
[1 May 2006]

Greece pursues an environment-friendly policy, and has adopted the required legal framework thereon. In this context, the armed forces of the country attach great importance to the environmental norms and regulations whenever they conduct their activities; especially whenever they proceed to destruction of obsolete or surplus ammunition. They take good care not to affect the environment. Therefore destruction of ammunition by detonation takes place only in urgent cases and in open spaces, whereas in all other cases, other methods that are environment-friendly are used.

Jordan

[Original: Arabic]
[3 May 2006]

1. The Jordanian Government complies with the agreements on disarmament and arms control, as well as with other relevant agreements and the Jordanian Environmental Protection Act of 2003, and it adheres to the principle of sustainable development, including its three economic, social and environmental dimensions. Ample evidence of this is provided by the numerous measures adopted by the Jordanian State in connection with the observance of environmental norms in agreements on disarmament and arms control. The most important of these measures are as follows:

(a) A list of dual-use chemical substances (which could be involved in the manufacture of proscribed weapons) is currently being compiled by the technical committee on the management of hazardous substances established pursuant to the Environmental Protection Act of 2003. A number of institutions take part in this committee, including the Jordanian Armed Forces, the Public Security Directorate, the Civil Defence Department, the General Intelligence Department, the General Customs Department, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Energy. A plan is also to be drawn up for the purpose of monitoring such substances, determining their whereabouts and ascertaining that their waste products are disposed of in such a

way as to ensure that no harm is caused to any of the various elements of the environment and that public safety is maintained;

(b) Large numbers of personnel from a variety of institutions have attended training courses on the subject of border control and the techniques employed in that connection. Participating institutions included the Jordanian Armed Forces, the General Customs Department, the Civil Defence Department and the General Intelligence Department. Training courses on the subject of cooperative monitoring among the countries of the region were also held and attended by participants from neighbouring States, as well as from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Egypt, Oman and Kuwait, the aim being to control the circulation of dual-use chemical substances and monitor such substances in order to promote compliance with the disarmament and other relevant agreements through safe and proper handling of dual-use chemical substances and through monitoring to ensure that they are disposed of without detriment to the environment. These specialized courses were held in the Cooperative Monitoring Centre at the Royal Scientific Society;

(c) The Jordanian Armed Forces are continuing to clear individual minefields in the Jordan Valley area in accordance with the implementing plan developed with the ultimate aim of achieving a mine-free area;

(d) The areas cleared of single mines are being rehabilitated and reclaimed in conjunction with the concerned entities and returned to their owners;

(e) Jordan is continuing to destroy its stockpile of single mines, with due regard for preservation of the surrounding environment and public safety insofar as the operations concerned are carried out in specially dug trenches situated far away from inhabited areas and protected nature reserves. The sites in question were selected with the help of ministries, public institutions and civil-society organizations, such as the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.

2. The waste produced from the destruction process is collected and buried in hazardous waste dumps in accordance with the scientific methods in force worldwide.

3. The Jordanian Armed Forces attach great importance to the environmental aspect, as exemplified by the following:

(a) Participation in national projects aimed at protecting and safeguarding the environment, such as cooperation with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature in selecting sites for a number of protected nature reserves to be established in the Jordan Valley area for the purpose of preserving biological diversity and ecosystems in the project area;

(b) The consideration given to the environmental aspect in the various routine and military activities which they undertake.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[12 April 2006]

With reference to the above subject matter relating to measures adopted by the Lebanese Government in order to implement the recommendations on disarmament made by the General Assembly of the United Nations, this Ministry sets forth the measures adopted in connection with the United Nations General Assembly resolutions listed below:

Resolution 57/53 on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security: The Lebanese State complies with United Nations resolutions designed to protect the security and confidentiality of information. The views of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities and the Ministry of Telecommunications are to be sought on the subject.

Resolution 57/55 on establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East: Lebanon complies with the United Nations resolution in connection with the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and possesses no weapons of mass destruction.

Resolution 57/63 on promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation: Lebanon possesses no weapons of mass destruction and supports the agreements prohibiting their production and proliferation, with which all States should comply.

Resolution 57/64 on observance of environmental norms in drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control: Lebanon possesses no weapons that have an impact on or are detrimental to the environment and supports the agreements on disarmament, arms control and the observance of environmental norms.

Resolution 57/71 on missiles: Lebanon complies with United Nations resolutions and possesses no missiles.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
[12 June 2006]

In regard to environmental norms in drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control, the Government of the State of Qatar makes a full contribution in this area, having established the Supreme Council for the Environment and Nature Reserves (SCENR). The Environmental Protection Act No. 30 of 2002 was also enacted, in addition to which there is an environmental safety division in the Qatari Armed Forces, all members of which work in coordination with the National Committee for the Prohibition of Weapons, which is the government body responsible for considering draft international agreements on the prohibition of weapons and for proposing the legislation and procedures required to implement such agreements, and enforce the laws relating to protection of the environment.